

INTEGRATING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INTO BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Modupe Oluwatoyin, DUROJAYE

Department of Business Education
School of Vocational and Technical Education,
Tai-solarin college of education
OMU, IJEBU, Ogun State

Abstract

The information age has really come to stay. The issue of modern technology has received tremendous emphasis in the recent time. Advancement in technological innovations and the use of computer will continue to stay with us. The influence of Information Technology (IT) permeates all spheres of human endeavours – social and economic thus changing the role pattern and activities of business. Organizations are striving to cope with the challenges of IT and schools are not left out because they produce labour for the world of work. This paper takes a look at the definition of business education and curriculum as well as information technology. It also examines the relationship between Business Education and IT, and the need to integrate IT into business education curriculum. This paper concludes that there is need for integration of IT innovations into business education programmes; there is need for training, retraining of teachers and purchase of IT equipment. Finally, the paper recommends that Nigerian University Commission (NUC) National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education should revise business education curricula to integrate IT innovations.

Introduction

The information age and its technology is no larger a fairy tale but a reality. Information technology's (IT) presence and impact are manifested in all works of life whether social or economic. This manifestation has also changes both the economic and social activities of man. Nwosu (2001), observes that IT has changed the nature of office work. The views of Rohan De Silva (1995), Dimowo (2001) and Atueyi (2001) are in accord with Nwosu. These authors have called for curriculum changes in business education that will integrate IT innovation.

The responsibility of providing appropriate training on business occupation rests in the hands of our educational institutions.

Information Technology

Information Technology has been defined by Lucy (2013) as the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numeric information by a micro-electronic based combination of computing and telecommunications; whereas Ononogbo (2002) notes that it is now a revolution which has penetrated almost all fields of human activity thus transforming our economic and social life. However, Atueyi (2001) opines that IT concept refers to the host of systems, equipment and materials essential computer-base which are used to achieve the set goals of an organization in relation to the functions of an office. From these observations, technological trends have changed the way business organizations operate. The relevance of IT in business education has also been emphasized by Adelstein (2000) that the success of office workers in today's business world depends on knowledge of computer terminology. He further opined that many businesses rely on teleconferences as a convenient way to hold meetings while the computer is used as an important tool in direct mail sending as a result of its easier, cheaper and more effective application.

Business Education and Curriculum

According to Nanassy (2000) business education is an educational programme that provides knowledge, skill and understanding needed for performance in business world as a consumer or producer. Osuala (2000) agrees with his views and stated that business education is a program me of instruction, which consists of two parts office education, which is a vocational programme for office careers, and general education, which is a programme that provides information and competencies needed for managing and using business. The definition of business education demands constant updating of knowledge and acquisition of appropriate skills towards achievement of competency. This will enable business students to be well equipped for future challenges. Four believes that business educators must anticipate the needs of business community in advance. In effect, business educators should update their curriculum in order to cope with the changes as well as challenges.

Curriculum took it is root from the Latin word 'curere' that means 'to run'. Thus curriculum could be seen as a running course or programmes of study (Onwuka 2004). To Caswell and Combell (2000), curriculum is composed of all the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers, Whereas Onwuka (2004) defines curriculum as a structured series of intended learning experiences that embrace purposeful experiences provided and directed by educational institutions achieve predetermined goals. In the views of Udeinya (2009), curriculum is the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcome formulated through systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuation and willful growth in personal as well as social competence.

The above definitions have clearly shown that curriculum develops and improves with time. It has definite goals irrespective of its varied definition and these goals are to achieve the needs of the learner and society at each given time. This determined by the trend of economic and social activities. For example during the 1980's Federal Government called for technological development in order to reduce her dependence on outside world while at present the federal government is on a nation-wide computer donation to some secondary schools at Abuja and at that occasion, the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Tallen: 2000:1) states that *“There is no better place for government to begin its present aggressive campaign than in schools”*. The minister (P. Tallen) further states that the president has charged the ministry to bring Nigeria into the global knowledge society. By this directive, she has noted, the ministry now has the responsibility of initiating polices, strategies and programmes that will help Nigeria to achieve the global knowledge.

Relationship Between Business Education and It

Initially business education provides knowledge, skills and understanding needed for performance in business world when most of the equipment were manual. Today, the use of manual equipment has been replaced with the use of electronic equipment. Nwosu (2009) observes that in the past technology was supportive because it served as aid to business education but innovations in IT have shifted this role from supportive to integrative. This in effect has changed the nature of office work as well as teaching methods. Visual aids were used by teachers for illustration but today both students and teachers operate these equipment especially it equipment which are used by students to learn in the absence of a teacher. Similarly, these IT equipments are used in offices to performance different functions.

Need for its Innovations in Business Education Curriculum

The existence of IT innovations has brought a lot of changes in every spheres of human endeavours especially in office operations. For example, the modern office no longer depend on the traditional method of collecting, processing, disseminating and sorting of information rather computers are used to perform these functions. In effect, these changes demand the need to tailor business education programmes towards IT innovations so that both students and teachers education programmes will take the initiatives in redesigning curriculum and making changes to the emerging needs of IT. He further stated that changes would be necessary in all the courses content of business education I order to reflect the new technological innovations because this will provide for acquisition of skills and achievement of competency. Okafor (2012) and Crew (2000) agree with Oladebo's views. They noted that business educators are duty bound to help the students acquire and

develop the needed skills and attitudes for employment by aligning curriculum with practice. They further indicated that business teachers must develop an adequate perception for the kind of personnel needed by business organizations, how to educate these personnel in order to harmonize the business organizations needs and business teachers' desire to assist business organizations.

If this harmony is achieved, business education will improve the employment opportunities of her graduates. This is a fact because employment trend in modern offices require prospective job seekers to be equipped with basic skills and competencies that will enable them enter and progress in the job. Alozie (2009) also agrees to this fact. He stated that it necessary to redesign business education curriculum in order to incorporate the modern information technology as this would guarantee effective performance in business offices. In Addition, Nwodo (2010) notes that managers of enterprises are educated but their knowledge is mismatched to current industrial and business realities because of the yawning technological gap. Nwodo's view clearly shows the need to integrate business education curriculum with IT. The need for this integration has been summarized by Okobi (1991:1):

The twenty-first century poses a real challenge to all those in businesses and those whose responsibility it is to develop appropriate curriculum.

From the foregoing the need to redesign business curriculum is obvious. It is more importantly clear as the curriculum for Secretarial Studies (National and Higher National Diplomas) was drawn in 1986 by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). While that of National Certificate in Education (NCE) was drawn by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1990. Both curriculums have been in use for more than a decade. Between 1986 and date, many changes have taken place in office structure, content, methods, roles and even personnel requirements. Thus if curriculum develops and improves with time as earlier stated, here is an urgent need to redesign the existing business education curriculum and adopt a constant review based on the monitoring results of technological innovations.

Some of the Problems Associated with Integration of it into Business Education Curriculum

Good as the case may be, the integration of IT into business curriculum is bound to be greeted with some problems. In the forefront is the huge financial requirement for the procurement of hard and software required for the programme. Acquisition of the hardware is not sufficient if they (computers, fax and their accessories) are not installed for usage at local, national and international levels; that is provision of E-mail, E-commerce, Internet etc. Alozie (2009) notes that lack of equipment has marred the environmental replication of work in training institutions and as a result half-baked graduates will be produced, While Atueyi (2000) enumerates

some of the problems to include scarcity of efficient technicians for repairing these equipment, constant power fluctuation which damages the equipment. Umeh's view (1996) agrees with that of Atueyi. He stated that inadequate power supply is one of the major constraints for the use of automated equipment. He noted that IT gadgets would be used in teaching and therefore requires regular supply of power. From the above, it is obvious that the installation of Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) facility that is interfaced between the power supply and IT equipment.

Umeh (2006) and Udenya (2009) highlighted the problem of staff as follows-absence of highly skilled information technologists and engineers, depth of experts in IT innovations. From the foregoing, it is necessary to state that the success of any curriculum effort hinges on the specialized manpower that will put it into practice. The issue of motivation is also a factor. There is need for incentives to be attached to the implementation of IT innovations in business curriculum. Both the teachers and resource personnel deserve appropriate reward in relation to implementation to the programme. If the incentives attached to the implementation do not satisfy the teachers, the curriculum might not well be implemented. Similarly, if the reluctant to implement such a curriculum plan (National Teachers Teacher's Institute Cycle 1. Vol. 7).

Conclusion

The traditional model for the delivery of business education has failed to prepare the youth to function adequately in this age as well as participate in the global society. Also from the discussion, it is obvious that IT and its innovations have penetrated into every human activity; as a result, the following conclusion has been drawn.

1. That business education curriculum should be redesigned to integrate IT innovations.
2. That business education should provide programmes that will help her graduates acquire skills on information technology.
3. That there is need for adequate IT training and retraining of business educators and their support staff.
4. That provision of adequate business education programmes and redesigning of its curriculum are nor devoid of problems.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. Business educators at all levels should be sent on short-term and long-term computer applications courses.
2. Federal government should provide fund to institutions for the purchase of IT equipment are bought; teachers are trained and retrained on the use of these equipment

3. The National Universities Commission (NUC) National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should as a matter of urgency revise and update business education curriculum to reflect IT innovations.
4. Provision and use of IT equipment demands availability of constant power, as a result Federal Government should beef-up her power supply and it is necessary that Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) facilities is provided for IT equipment purchased.

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